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ABSTRACT

Suggesting that all Americans join together in the effort to educate children, this paper presents 1-page "tip sheets" (on 8 separate topics in education) that provide tips for what families, schools, businesses, colleges, and community groups can do to meet the challenges facing American education. Each tip sheet presents background information on the topic, 10 tips for the topic, a list of selected resources, addresses of organizations, and a list of related publications and forms. Topics covered in the tip sheets are: (1) Becoming a Reading, Literate Society; (2) Supporting the American Family in Children's Learning: The Bedrock of Quality Education; (3) Making Our Schools Safe and Disciplined: A Precondition for Learning; (4) Achieving High Standards and Real Accountability: Reaching for New Levels of Excellence; (5) Helping Our Students Become Technologically Literate: A Basic Skill for the 21st Century; (6) Preparing Young People for Careers: A Strong Transition from School to Work; (7) Making College More Accessible: Keeping the Promise of the American Dream; and (8) Expanding Public School Choice: Strengthening Public Education as a Foundation of Our American Way of Life. (RS)

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TIPS ON MEETING AMERICAN EDUCATION'S CHALLENGES

Overview

In his third annual State of American Education address, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley poses this challenge to all Americans: "If we are to make the most of our opportunities in this new education era, we must get into high gear and 'fast forward' what we are doing."

Such "fast forwarding" requires that all Americans join together in the effort to educate our children. It means that we must ensure that Americans are a literate and reading people. It means building partnerships for education and forgetting partisanship. It means keeping our playgrounds safe and healthy, and not maintaining playgrounds for turf wars and politics as usual.

Education cannot be about politics. It must be about helping our children and young people learn to higher standards and teaching them basic American values. Education is about giving every child a fair shake and discovering in all children their special skills and talents — uncorking that world-renowned "American Ingenuity" that has characterized our country.

Secretary Riley aptly notes, "America does not have to fear the future if we are willing to educate our young people to master the information economy."

Today we have major challenges confronting American education. In the following pages, tips are provided for what we can do together to meet these challenges. These tip sheets will continue to be works in progress, and we look forward to your comments and ideas.

Joining forces for education, we must seek common solutions to common problems.

Challenges Facing American Education

- A. Becoming a Reading, Literate Society
- B. Supporting the American Family in Children's Learning: The Bedrock of Quality Education
- C. Making Our Schools Safe and Disciplined: A Precondition for Learning
- D. Achieving High Standards and Real Accountability: Reaching for New Levels of Excellence
- E. Helping Our Students Become Technologically Literate: A Basic Skill for the 21st Century
- F. Preparing Young People for Careers: A Strong Transition from School to Work
- G. Making College More Accessible: Keeping the Promise of the American Dream
- H. Expanding Public School Choice: Strengthening Public Education as a Foundation of Our American Way of Life

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TIPS ON MEETING AMERICAN EDUCATION'S CHALLENGES

BECOMING A READING, LITERATE SOCIETY

This page offers you tips on how to improve the reading skills of children and improve literacy at the community level for a more literate America. This is one of the issues that Americans say they want addressed by their schools.

Background: Reading is the basis of all learning. The time families spend reading with children helps build a solid foundation of reading skills. The amount of time is the single greatest predictor of children's reading success. Schools must make literacy and the basics a top priority. Reading relies not only on good instruction in school but also on reinforcement outside of school. If children do not read over the summer, for example, they can lose three to four months of reading gains they made over the previous school year. If families, schools, community groups, employers and religious groups make improving the skills of children a top priority, then we can attain the goal of being a reading, literate society.

10 Tips That Can Help Increase the Reading Skills of Our Children

1. **Families:** Set 30 minutes aside every night to read to or with children. Read with children or grandchildren in a way that actively involves them. Ask and answer questions about pictures and people in the story and point to pictures, letters, and words. Ask older students questions that get them to think and solve problems. Be sure your children or grandchildren see you read and write. Reading the newspaper together is one good way to involve older children in civic life. Dads and granddads can be especially important reading role models for their sons.
2. **Families:** Take your children to the library and get them a library card. Visit the library at least once a week and allow the children time to select their own books. Share a good book with a teenager. Encourage older children in the family to read to and with younger children in the family.
3. **Families:** Limit the amount of television children view to no more than two hours on school nights, and help them select the right programs for their age. Watch and discuss television programs together. Studies show that academic achievement drops sharply for children who watch more than two hours of TV a day, and that the quality of programming is also of concern. When the President's new V-chip is available in television sets, ask for it.
4. **Schools:** Rigorously teach reading and writing skills and the core academic subjects. Compare your reading curriculum and materials against the most successful schools and best state standards. Encourage family involvement in teaching and learning the basics and raising standards. Let families know what they can do at home to help children become better readers. Use interesting, real-life, community settings to stimulate reading and writing. For example, organize students and their families to conduct an oral history project, a history or case study of their school or neighborhood, or a folklife project that involves collecting local stories, recipes for a community cookbook, or learning local songs, art, or folk dances.
5. **Schools:** Encourage teachers to work together to teach reading and writing across all the subjects, teach new vocabulary words and use technology to engage students in challenging reading and writing activities. Offer extended learning time opportunities for students after school and in the summer to learn reading and other basic skills.
6. **Schools:** Start a schoolwide family reading or family literacy program. Recruit and organize reading tutors from community groups. Offer a reading challenge to students to read a certain number of minutes each day or a specific number of books in one month. Sponsor a sign-up day for public library cards at the school. When children meet the challenge, reward them with a special activity.
7. **Libraries, Families, and Schools:** Set a summer reading and literacy goal for your school and community -- to read and write 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Reward your children with special books from the library, a favorite kid's magazine, or even buy a paperback book for work well done in reading.
8. **Businesses:** Encourage your employees to read to and with their children every night. Provide copies of READ*WRITE*NOW! kits for employees, by obtaining them from the U. S. Department of Education or copublishing

them with your business's logo on them, and work with other community-based literacy groups.

9. **Businesses:** Provide a list of schools and community organizations that can provide extra help before and after school in reading for employees' children and for adults to learn to read and write better.
10. **Libraries, community groups and religious organizations:** Start community READ*WRITE*NOW! programs. Obtain volunteers who can meet with children once a week for one-half hour to read and write together. Provide tutors or mentors for students during the school day and after school. Start or expand adult literacy training. Donate telephones, voice-mail systems, and personnel to begin a community homework hotline to keep parents informed and help children with homework that involves reading and other basics.

Selected Resources: Tutors and reading partners can be obtained by asking your local school, PTA, library, community group, or house of worship for help. Many Girl Scout cadette troops, Boys and Girls Clubs, Americorps volunteers, retired teachers, librarians, and college sororities and fraternities have tutor volunteers. READ*WRITE*NOW! kits, developed by reading and writing specialists to help children increase their reading and writing skills, can be obtained through local libraries, the U. S. Department of Education's tollfree number 1-800-USA-LEARN, the U. S. Department of Education's homepage on the World-Wide Web, and through the ERIC documentation system at your local library. Schools can use funds from the U.S. Department of Education's Title I-basic skills program to extend learning time after school and in the summer for children who need it and redesign the reading and basic skills programs to be more effective to reach for higher standards.

Organizations that can immediately get you started to help children read and working for a more literate America include:

American Library Association

50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
312-944-6780

Books and Beyond

309 North Rios
Solano Beach, CA 92075
619-755-3823

Learning Disabilities Association of America

4156 Library Road
Pittsburg, PA 15234
412-341-1515

International Reading Association

800 Barksdale Road, P.O. Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139
302-731-1600 ext. 220

National Center for Family Literacy

Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200
325 W. Main Street
Louisville, KY 40202-4251
502-584-1133

Even Start Family Literacy Programs

Contact your State Department of Education or the
U.S. Department of Education at 202-260-0996

Americorps

1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525

Extra help in the basics – Title I

Contact your State Department of Education or the
U.S. Department of Education at 202-260-0826

Reading is Fundamental

600 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Extra help for students with disabilities - Special Education

Contact your State Department of Education or the Office
of Special Education at the U.S. Department of Education
at 202-205-5507

Pizza Hut's Book It! Program

9111 East Douglas
Wichita, KS 67201

The following publications can be ordered free of charge from the U.S. Department of Education by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN.

• **READ*WRITE*NOW!**

- *Activities for Reading and Writing*
- *Play on Paper*
- *The READ*WRITE*NOW! Partners Tutoring Program*

The following publications are available from the National Library of Education, U.S. Department of Education, by calling 1-800-424-1616:

- *State of the Art: Transforming Ideas for Teaching and Learning to Read*
- *Helping Your Child Learn to Read*
- *Helping Your Child Learn to Use the Library*



TIPS ON MEETING AMERICAN EDUCATION'S CHALLENGES

SUPPORTING THE AMERICAN FAMILY IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING: THE BEDROCK OF QUALITY EDUCATION

This page gives you tips on how to help support the American family in children's learning. When you get involved, you can work on an issue that Americans say they want their schools to address.

Background: The American family is the rock on which a solid education can and must be built. Thirty years of research clearly show that family and community involvement in children's learning is key for getting children on the right path in life. Good practices for families include: taking the time to talk with children at evening meals, reading together, using TV wisely, staying in contact with your child's school, demanding high academic standards, knowing where your children are, and talking directly to your children about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Increased family involvement should be a special focus of local, state and national efforts to raise academic standards but every "sector" within the local community has a role: schools, employers, community organizations and religious groups.

10 Tips That Can Support Families in Helping Children Learn

1. **Families:** Read and write with children or grandchildren in a way that actively involves them. Ask and answer questions about pictures and people in the story and point to pictures, letters, and words. Ask older students questions that get them to think and solve problems. Be sure your children or grandchildren see you read and write. Dads and granddads can be especially important reading role models for their sons.
2. **Families:** Limit the amount of television children view to no more than two hours on school nights, and help them select the right programs for their age. Watch and discuss television programs together. Studies show that academic achievement drops sharply for children who watch more than two hours of TV a day, and that the quality of programming is also of concern. When the President's new V-chip is available in television sets, ask for it.
3. **Families:** Set high standards for your students' course work; encourage your students to work hard to meet challenging standards; and make sure they complete their homework each night. Think ahead about preparing your children and grandchildren for college -- academically and financially. New financial aid proposals make college more accessible for qualified students at all income levels.
4. **Families and schools:** Work together. Parents and teachers should reach out to each other and regularly talk before any problems happen. Use newsletters, voicemail, cable TV, and other new technologies to keep informed of school activities of mutual interest.
5. **Schools:** Be family-friendly! Review school policies, newsletters, and correspondence for educational jargon that parents might not readily understand. Make a quick inventory of school signs. As a former President of the National PTA noted, a sign directing that "Visitors, report to the Principal's Office" is not especially welcoming, particularly for those who might have had bad school experiences themselves. A former National Teacher of the Year puts rocking chairs in her classroom for parent-teacher conferences. Join America Goes Back to School in the Fall of 1996.
6. **Schools:** Rigorously teach the basics and core academic subjects, and encourage family involvement in teaching and learning the basics and raising standards. Let families know what they can do at home to help. Use interesting, real-life, community settings to stimulate learning.
7. **Businesses:** Sign the Employers Promise for Learning. Employers throughout America are pledging to help improve education and be family-friendly for learning. Call 1-800-USA-LEARN. Businesses are offering leave time for employees to volunteer in school, flex-time, parent resource centers, help in local school improvements, and sites for student work-study and internship experiences.
8. **Schools, community groups, religious organizations, and businesses:** Meet as school-family, community organization, religious group, and business "sector" to commit to being family-friendly and helping families and schools help children learn. Then, sign on to the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning via the School-Family

Partnership Pledge, the Community Promise, the Statement of Common Purpose, or the Employers for Learning Promise.

9. **Community members:** Sponsor "Family Math" or "Family Science" programs or events where community members talk about math and science in their careers and lead "hands-on" activities. For example, local merchants can talk about how math and science are used in their stores. Students can be asked to calculate the price of food in a grocery cart, weigh produce and calculate its cost, figure the cost of items reduced for sale, and figure sales tax, commissions, or tips.
10. **Community groups, religious organizations, and businesses:** Provide tutors or mentors for students during the school day and after school. Start or expand adult literacy training in core subjects. Donate telephones, voice-mail systems, and personnel to begin a community homework hotline to keep parents informed and help children with homework. Donate equipment, if necessary, and ask members of our organization to participate.

Selected Resources: You can go to your local school, PTA, community group, or house of worship for more help. In addition, 28 Parental Information and Resource Centers have been funded through the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. For more information on these parent centers, call 202-401-0039. Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act, which provides resources to schools needing extra help to strengthen programs in the basics and core academics, encourages the creation of school-parent compacts in half of the nation's schools. For more information on school-parent compacts, call 202-260-0965. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act funds 70 Parent Training and Information Projects across the 50 states to help parents of children with disabilities. To get a copy of "A Directory of Parent Training and Information Projects" and for more information call the National Information Center for Children & Youth with Disabilities at 1-800-695-0285. The U.S. Department of Education supplies two-thirds of all student financial aid for college (loans and grants). Call 1-800-4-FEDAID for more information on student aid. The following national organizations can also provide you with more information.

The National PTA
135 South La Salle
Department 1860
Chicago, IL 60674-1860
312-549-3253

Family Involvement Partnership for Learning
600 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-8173
1-800-USA-LEARN

Parents as Teachers
9374 Olive Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63132
314-432-4330

Family Math
Lawrence Hall of Science
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720-5200
510-642-6550

Family Geography Challenge
National Geographic Society
1145 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-828-6686

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
Institute for Educational Leadership
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW
8th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
202-822-8405

HIPPY USA
Teachers College
Box 113
525 West 10th St.
New York, NY 10027
212-678-3500

The following publications can be ordered free of charge from the U.S. Department of Education by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN.

- **READ*WRITE*NOW!**
- *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning*
- *America Goes Back to School Partners' Activity Guide*
- *Employers, Families and Education: Promoting Family Involvement in Learning*
- *Team up for Kids! How Schools Can Support Family Involvement in Education*
- *Be Family-Friendly: It's Good Business!*
- *Join Together for Kids! How Communities Can Support Family Involvement in Education*
- *Summer Home Learning Recipes*
- *Preparing Your Child for College*
- *Helping Your Child Learn Series (Read, Math, Science, History, and others)*



TIPS ON MEETING AMERICAN EDUCATION'S CHALLENGES

MAKING OUR SCHOOLS SAFE AND DISCIPLINED: A PRECONDITION FOR LEARNING

This page lists tips on how you can help make our schools safe and disciplined. This is one of the issues that Americans say they want addressed by their schools.

Background: Disciplined and safe schools are a precondition for learning. One way families, communities, and school personnel work to improve schools is by establishing guidelines and standards for safe schools and disciplined student behavior. When children and teachers feel safe in their schools, teaching and learning are significantly improved. While most schools are already safe and drug-free, a growing number of schools in all parts of the country — urban, suburban, and rural — are experiencing problems with violence and with alcohol and drug use. From school uniforms to strict discipline codes, and from the training of teachers in dealing with violence to after-school programs to keep kids off the streets, schools, parents, and communities are fighting back against violence and drugs.

10 Tips to Help Make Our Schools Safe and Disciplined

1. **Families:** Talk to children about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and drug use. Make sure they have accurate and up-to-date information about alcohol and drugs, and that they understand that hanging out with kids who use alcohol, drugs and weapons can affect their own safety and relationships with people whose respect they value. These conversations could literally save their lives.
2. **Schools and families:** Work together to take aggressive actions, when necessary, to ensure an orderly and safe environment. Some schools are employing uniforms to encourage school spirit and stem assaults over clothing or gang apparel. Others are preparing their staffs to prevent violence through family and community engagement and conflict resolution. Still others are teaching character education and citizenship.
3. **Families and community groups:** Build networks with other adults to talk about issues such as alcohol, drug use, violent behavior, and school safety. Form a parents' organization or community association, such as "parent patrols" or "security dads and moms" that will work in and around school to discourage alcohol and drug abuse and ward off unwanted intruders. Build partnerships with local law enforcement.
4. **Schools, families, community groups, and religious organizations:** Work together to develop responses to violence and substance abuse that let students know that all parties view the problem the same way. Help plan and participate in school and community alcohol- and drug-free activities, including weekend dances and social events, holiday celebrations, proms, and graduation parties. Sponsor after-school and summer learning activities, sports and cultural events.
5. **Schools, families, and students:** Set standards of behavior and clear expectations for children and students. Read the school's discipline policies and discuss them with young people. Talk about how school rules support the rights of all students to attend schools that are free of violence and substance abuse. Practice clear responses to people who are intoxicated, abusive, aggressive, or hostile. Develop an honor code for behavior in school. Convene meetings in which students join with parents, teachers, principals, school board members, administrators, and community members to develop a list of behaviors that contribute to a positive school environment. Develop ways to implement the code. Elect a panel of parents, teachers, students, and community members to work with students who have trouble meeting the honor code standards. Make sure all families have a copy of the school's discipline code and urge them to read it. Review the code periodically and involve parents and students in the process.
7. **Community groups and religious organizations:** Conduct conflict resolution workshops that teach children how to respond without violence when someone is "bothering" them. Work with students on a "squash it" anti-violence campaign.
8. **Businesses:** Sponsor sports teams, bands, chess clubs, arts activities, and other positive activities for children when they are not in school.

9. **Community groups, local law enforcement, religious organizations, and businesses:** Help create safe corridors for children on their way to and from school by extending your "place of business" beyond your doors. Businesses can also identify themselves as "Safe Spaces" — places youth can go if they are being threatened. The police can work with businesses, parents, and schools to design and implement patrols which bring trained safety officers into and around schools when necessary.
10. **Local news organizations and television stations:** Cover positive stories about youth activities and accomplishments. They make great human interest stories. Highlight youth, school, and community efforts that have taken on violence, drug, alcohol, and gang issues.

Selected Resources: You can seek help from local sources such as your local PTA, school board, community agencies, and police department. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act provides funding through the U.S. Department of Education to help schools build local partnerships to reduce violence and drug use, install metal detectors and hire security guards, and train teachers to prevent problems. The act offers school districts the flexibility to design their own comprehensive school safety programs and coordinate them with community agencies. For information, call 202-260-3954. The following organizations also provide assistance and information:

American Council for Drug Education
204 Monroe St.
Rockville, MD 20850
301-294-0600

National Center to Prevent Handgun Violence
1225 Eye St., NW
Washington, DC 20005
202-289-7319

National Crime Prevention Council
1700 K St., NW
Washington, DC 20006
202-466-NCPC

National Families in Action, Inc.
2296 Henderson Mill Road, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30345
404-934-6364

National Family Partnership
PO Box 3878
St Louis, MO 63122
314-845-1933

National PTA Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Project
330 N. Wabash Ave.
Chicago, IL 60611
312-670-6782

National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law
711 G St., SE
Washington, DC 20003
202-546-6644

National School Safety Center
4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290,
Westlake Village, CA 91362
805-373-9977

Partnership for a Drug Free America
405 Lexington Ave.
New York, NY 10174
212-922-1560
1-800-624-0100

National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information
PO Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20852
1-800-SAY-NO-TO

Office of National Drug Control Policy
Executive Office of the President
Washington, DC 20500
202-467-9800

The following are available free of charge from the U.S. Department of Education by calling 1-800-624-0100:

- Creating Safe Schools: A Resource Collection for Planning and Action
- Manual on School Uniforms
- Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention
- READY SET GO
- School Administrators' Violence Prevention Resource Anthology



TIPS ON MEETING AMERICAN EDUCATION'S CHALLENGES

ACHIEVING HIGH STANDARDS AND REAL ACCOUNTABILITY: REACHING FOR NEW LEVELS OF EXCELLENCE

This page offers tips on how to help achieve high education standards and real accountability. This is one of the issues that Americans say they want addressed by their schools.

Background: High expectations and high standards bring out the best in students and schools. Although states and communities are starting to make progress in developing high, challenging standards for all students, academic standards are often too low and many students still suffer from the tyranny of low expectations. In budget crises, schools are reducing or eliminating gifted and talented classes, arts education, and after-school extracurricular activities. In 1989, the nation's governors and the President reached agreement that unless the nation established clear education goals and citizens worked cooperatively to achieve them, the United States would be unprepared for the challenges of the 21st century. Congress adopted eight National Education Goals in 1994 and schools, states, national organizations, and communities are working on raising academic standards to reach the Goals. The goals make raising standards a priority across America.

10 Tips That Can Help Achieve High Standards and Real Accountability

1. **Schools:** Work with parents, teachers, businesses and local colleges to identify the types of skills and understandings needed by your students. Compare your standards against the best schools, your state's standards and voluntary national standards. Involve the whole community in the attempt to raise standards of promotion, graduation, and improved content in core subjects. Report on progress to your parents and community.
2. **Families:** Make sure your children enroll in challenging courses. Encourage high schoolers to take advanced placement courses or advanced technology and tech-prep courses. Be as involved as you can in your children's education each and every day. And always expect your children to learn.
3. **Colleges:** Share with teachers, parents, and students the types of skills and work habits needed to be successful in college. Explain how taking advanced placement courses and/or tech-prep in high school is a great advantage when entering college.
4. **Businesses:** Encourage part-time student employees to attend school every day and to study hard. Ask to see transcripts and diplomas when high school graduates apply for jobs, and call teachers or principals to get job references. This will send students the message that achievement in school counts in the "real" world.
5. **Businesses:** Share with the school and community the skills that are needed for today's -- and tomorrow's -- jobs, and work with schools to help students learn those skills. Offer work-study opportunities for students and summer opportunities for teachers to see skills needed for today's and tomorrow's employment.
6. **Families, schools, community members, religious groups, and businesses:** Sponsor community discussion groups to talk about high standards for student achievement. In partnership with local schools, develop statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do as a result of their education. Work with schools to develop clear, high standards of achievement for all students -- those going directly to college and those in occupational or tech-prep courses preparing for careers. Make sure students have access to high-level instruction in all the core subjects -- English, math, science, the arts, civics, geography, history, economics, and foreign languages -- and in key occupational areas.
7. **Families, schools, community members, religious groups and businesses:** Convene an assembly, discussion group or after-school program to tell personal stories to students about how "Going the Extra Mile Made a Difference in My Life." These stories should reinforce the real benefits of having high standards that require discipline, extra effort, dedicated study, and persistence.
8. **Students and schools:** Encourage students to work hard to achieve the school's standards and their personal goals. Convene small groups of students from your school and ask them to put into writing what they expect to know and be able to do when they graduate. Ask them what they want to do after completing high school (further education, work, independent living) and what they have to do to prepare for those activities? What knowledge and skills will they need

to succeed? Share the results with school staff, the students, and the PTA.

9. **Community, religious groups, schools:** Offer mentoring and tutoring programs and homework centers to help children do well in learning their challenging course work. Organize a regular time during the week for parent/child sports, such as basketball, softball, volleyball, kickball, or soccer. Try to make the event an ongoing activity with parents and children playing these and other games together, or create arts-and-crafts, music-and-dancing evenings.
10. **Businesses:** Adopt flexible employee leave policies that allow family members to attend school conferences or volunteer in their children's schools. Join other employers in signing on to the Employer's Promise for Learning. Assist in school improvement efforts. Provide apprenticeship and internship opportunities for students geared to high academic and occupational standards.

Selected Resources: Contact your local school district or state department of education to find out what's going on in your community and state to develop and set higher educational and occupational standards. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act provides funding to help schools raise standards and improve their accountability. It encourages communities to create their own locally developed school improvement plans. For information, call your state education department or 202-401-0039.

The following are other sources of information on standards and associations and organizations coordinating the development of voluntary standards in core subjects.

Council of Chief State School Officers
1 Massachusetts Avenue, NW/Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001-1431
202-408-5505

Council for Basic Education
1319 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004
202-347-4171

National Alliance of Business
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
202-289-2800

Math
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
1906 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
1-800-235-7566

Arts
Music Educators National Conference
1806 Robert Fulton Drive
Reston, VA 22091
1-800-828-0229

Civics and Government
Center for Civic Education
5146 Douglas Fir Road
Calabasas, CA 91302
1-800-350-4223

Foreign Language
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
6 Executive Blvd.
Yonkers, NY 10701-6801
914-963-8830

Geography
National Geographic Society
P.O. Box 1640
Washington, DC 20013-1640
1-800-368-2728

Science
National Research Council
National Science Education Standards Project
2101 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20418
202-334-1399

The following publication can be ordered free of charge from the U.S. Department of Education by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN.

- *Moving America to the Head of the Class.* Education Excellence Partnership, 1995.
- *Teachers and GOALS 2000: Leading the Journey Toward High Standards for All Students.* U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C., 1995.
- *State Content Standards.* Directory of state projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Washington, D.C., 1995.



TIPS ON MEETING AMERICAN EDUCATION'S CHALLENGES

HELPING OUR STUDENTS BECOME TECHNOLOGICALLY LITERATE: A BASIC SKILL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

This page offers tips on how to help our students become technologically literate. This is one of the issues that Americans say they want addressed by their schools.

Background: Many schools are using technology in their classrooms to provide engaging and challenging learning experiences. Computers help students learn at their own pace, provide unlimited sources of information, offer access to other learners and mentors, and motivate students of all ages. But access is critical. While half of public schools have access to the Internet, more than 90 percent of instructional classrooms are not yet connected to the "Information Superhighway" and too many schools have yet to reap the full benefits of technology. In the information age, we still have schools that were designed for the factory age. In classrooms that could be modern communication centers for learning, the basic tools of instruction continue to be the blackboard and chalk. Only a handful of schools have access to the new technologies that are becoming central to our lives. Indeed, many schools have less technology than the neighborhood grocery store.

10 Things You Can Do to Help Become Technologically Literate

1. **Families:** Encourage your school to provide access to the computer lab after school and on weekends.
2. **Families and community organizations:** Explore options for the use of technology in the schools and in the home, such as take-home personal computers from schools and libraries.
3. **Families, community groups, religious organizations, and businesses:** Develop a technology plan for your school that explores how technology can support students, teachers, and administrators. Talk with local cable, telecommunications, and wireless companies about ways to improve technical facilities at your local school, including telephones in the classrooms, e-mail linkages across the building, and free or low-cost modem access between school and home.
4. **Schools:** Work with local businesses to set up a voice-mail system to help parents communicate with teachers and principals. Make the use of technology and computers a learning priority at every grade level. Provide opportunities for teachers with computers to demonstrate how technology can be applied to classroom teaching and learning. Allow time for technology-literate teachers to help colleagues. Invite families to visit classrooms while students are using the computers. Offer Saturday family and senior citizen computer classes taught by students and teachers.
5. **Schools:** Set up a school-based communications network to share information about useful software for teachers, and send home ideas for family-student learning through school-to-home modem access. Set up a computer lending library so families can borrow computers and software. Ask parents who are computer-literate to work with families and students who want to learn more about technology. Challenge students to be resources and experts to design World Wide Web pages and train teachers and parents in the effective use of technology.
6. **School boards and community groups:** Build bridges with State Public Utility Commissioners to make sure schools and libraries have affordable access to telecommunications.
7. **Colleges, community groups, libraries, and religious organizations:** Establish computer labs in neighborhood centers. Work with local community colleges or technical schools to offer professional development opportunities for teachers using online materials and online discussions. Offer family classes on computing. Encourage students, families and teachers to access the World Wide Web through your local library or via online services at home, and build relationships with pen pals in other communities or countries.
8. **Colleges, community groups and businesses:** Explore ways that technology can be used to enhance learning for children with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and other students with special needs.
9. **Businesses:** Establish computer donation and upgrading programs for schools and families. Assist schools directly by supplying used, no-cost, or low-cost computers and software, modems, and training and support to help teachers use technology in the classroom to teach better the basics and core academics.

10. **Businesses:** Act as an online mentor to students, parents, teachers, and community members who are exploring the best ways to use new technology for learning. If you use the Internet, help teachers learn how they and their students can also use it. Contact the Tech Corps for volunteers in your community who are working with schools.

Selected Resources: Check with the technology coordinator in your local school district or state education agency, your local library, and local Computer Users Groups for further help. Check your local telephone directory for the number of the Computer Users Groups. At the U.S. Department of Education, Challenge Grants for Technology in Education provide funding to school consortia to support the development and innovative use of technology to enhance learning. Challenge grants help communities turn their schools into information age learning centers. President Clinton recently proposed a \$2 billion initiative to build and support state and local partnerships promoting technological literacy for all students. For information, call 202-708-6001.

In addition, there are national organizations such as:

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

1787 Agate Street
Eugene, OR 97403-1923
1-800-336-5191 or 503-346-4414.

Educational Resources Information Clearinghouses (ERIC)

ACCESS ERIC
1600 Research Blvd.
Rockville, MD 20850-3172
1-800-LET-ERIC
AskERIC (askeric@ericir.syr.edu)

KickStart Initiative: Connecting America's Communities to the Information Highway
National Information Infrastructure Advisory Council
NTIA Openness Center
Department of Commerce, Room 1609
Washington, DC 20230
202-482-3999
<http://www.benton.org/kickstart/kick.home.html>

The National Parent Information Network
ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois
805 W. Pennsylvania Ave.
Urbana, IL 61801-4897
1-800-583-4135 or 217-333-1386

The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education Projects
The Ohio State University
1929 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1079
614-292-1373

Tech Corps
P.O. Box 65332
Washington, DC 20035
508-620-7749
<http://www.ustc.org>

If you have access to any online service or to the Internet, you can reach our World Wide Web site at <http://www.ed.gov>; our gopher server is at gopher.ed.gov (or select North America-->USA-->General-->U.S. Department of Education from the All/Other Gophers menu on your system.) FTP users can ftp to ftp.ed.gov and log on as anonymous. E-mail users can get our catalog and instructions on how to use our mail server by sending e-mail to almanac@inet.ed.gov; in the body of the message, type send catalog. You may also contact your Regional Technology Consortium:

Northwest Regional Technology Consortium
505-275-9624

North Central Regional Technology Consortium
708-218-1272

NetTech-Northeast Regional Technology Consortium
212-541-0972

Southwest & Pacific Regional Technology Consortium
310-985-1570

South Central Regional Technology Consortium
913-864-4954

Southeast & Islands Regional Technology Consortium
910-334-3211



TIPS ON MEETING AMERICAN EDUCATION'S CHALLENGES

PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR CAREERS: A STRONG TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

This page gives you tips on how to help better prepare our youth for careers. This is one of the issues that Americans say they want addressed by their schools.

Background: When challenging academics are combined with practical on-the-job experience, students become motivated and excited about learning. They get hands-on, rigorous preparation for careers and college. Some communities across America are beginning to come together to improve their schools and enhance teaching and learning in career preparation. Some are building innovative school-to-work systems to better prepare youth for good jobs, rewarding careers, and learning for a lifetime. Some businesses are joining forces with schools to offer worksite learning experiences, mentors, and exposure to careers. In some high schools, school-to-work programs are organized around broad career themes, with links to education and postsecondary training after high school. While America has a number of exciting school-to-career initiatives, they still are not available to many students and that's our challenge.

10 Tips That Can Help Prepare Youth for Careers

1. **Families:** Expose your children to a wide variety of career possibilities through contacts with friends and acquaintances. Take your children to work. Participate in your child's learning and urge them to take advantage of school-to-work opportunities in your area.
2. **Students:** Explore potential career fields, and learn about the skills and education needed to enter those fields. Talk with career counselors, family friends, and teachers.
3. **Libraries:** Offer a career resource directory of extracurricular programs, internships, and activities available for youth in the community.
4. **Community members, businesses, and religious groups:** Volunteer to participate as tutors or mentors so that young people get opportunities to talk with adults about their jobs. Visit schools and share your work experience with students.
5. **Teachers:** Integrate hands-on learning with rigorous academics. Develop interdisciplinary, project-based curricula. Join forces with employers and discover how you can work together. Do an internship with a business during the summer. Relate what you are teaching to today's and tomorrow's world of work.
6. **Guidance counselors:** Develop and maintain ways to keep students informed about a wide range of career and educational opportunities. Assist students in developing personalized plans to reach their goals. Develop workplace readiness programs with employers.
7. **Colleges and universities:** Inform high school students about the wide range of occupational and technical programs that are available in your school. Establish programs in which work-based learning and service learning counts as credits for graduation.
8. **Businesses:** Contact the high schools in your area to see if there is a school-to-work or tech prep program available. If a program exists, offer to participate by providing work-based learning experiences for students, apprenticeships, internships, work study and training. If no program exists, start one by working with other employers, high schools, and community colleges. Ask employees to volunteer at school to talk about their jobs and demonstrate what they do. Another good idea is to help students and teachers set up business ventures. Buy products and services from them.
9. **Businesses:** Hire qualified graduates of school-to-work programs. Set up a program where students can shadow employees to learn about their jobs. Make high school grades meaningful by asking prospective employees to show you their transcripts.
10. **Employees:** Urge your employer to participate in local school-to-work systems and volunteer to serve as a mentor or

supervisor for students who participate. Volunteer in schools to help students learn about your job and tutor them in critical skills.

Selected Resources: Funds are available from the U.S. Department of Education to underwrite the initial costs of planning and establishing school-to-career systems at the state and local level. For more information on funding and development assistance, contact your state department of education or the School-to-Work Opportunities Learning & Information Center at 1-800-251-7236.

The National School-to-Work Learning & Information Center provides information, assistance and training to build school-to-work opportunities throughout the country. The Center uses the latest information technology to help increase the capacity of professionals and to develop and implement School-to-Work systems across the nation. Its services are available to state and local school-to-work offices, employers, schools, labor, parents, students, and the general public.

The Center, jointly operated by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor, offers access through six distinct services:

- The 800-number "Answer Line" (1-800-251-7236)
- Internet Home Page/Information Network (<http://www.stw.ed.gov>)
- Relevant publications
- A resource bank of select technical assistance providers
- Databases on key School-to-Work contacts, organizations, and practices
- Meetings, conferences, and training sessions

Service learning opportunities can also be important to help prepare youth for a career. For information about the AmeriCorps program and service learning, call 1-800-ACORPS.

The following associations and organizations are coordinating the development of voluntary occupational standards in four critical areas:

Occupational Standards--Bioscience

Education Development Center
55 Chapter St.
Newton, MA 02158
617-969-7100

Occupational Standards--Chemical Process Industries

American Chemical Society
1155 16th St., NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-872-8734

Occupational Standards--Electronics

American Electronics Association
5201 Great American Parkway
Box 54990
Santa Clara, CA 95056
408-987-4267

Occupational Standards--Photonics

Center for Occupational Research and Development
601 Lake Air Drive
Waco, TX 76710
817-772-8756



TIPS ON MEETING AMERICAN EDUCATION'S CHALLENGES

MAKING COLLEGE MORE ACCESSIBLE: KEEPING THE PROMISE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

This page offers tips on how to help make college more accessible to America's students and families. This is one of the issues that Americans say they want addressed.

Background: Higher education in America is the "jewel" of education worldwide. Our diverse colleges and universities produce more Nobel laureates than any other higher education system in the world. Many Americans actively participate in education programs beyond high school. In 1991, nearly 24 percent of Americans aged 25 to 64 had completed college compared to about 17 percent of Canadians and 13 percent of Japanese. Workers with bachelor's degrees earn, on average, almost \$14,000 more a year than workers with high school diplomas. Graduates of community colleges with a two-year associate degree earn almost \$6,000 more per year than high school dropouts. Not every student who wants to attend college can do so. But with adequate preparation -- academic and financial -- more students can have the opportunity to attend technical or community colleges or four-year colleges.

10 Activities That Can Make College More Accessible

1. **Families and community members:** Find out whether the high schools in your district offer challenging classes that are recommended for college-bound students and tech-prep or school-to-work programs. These include courses such as algebra I and II, geometry, trigonometry, calculus, biology, chemistry, physics, foreign languages, advanced technologies, computers, the arts, music, literature and composition, and advanced placement classes. If the schools do not offer challenging courses in all core subject areas and critical occupational areas, contact the school board and ask for such courses. Encourage your children to take the courses that are recommended for college-bound students and for career fields that require one or two years of postsecondary education.
2. **Colleges:** Inform middle- and high-school students, teachers, and parents which courses are needed to get into college and which are needed for the various associate degrees and four-year college majors. Help parents and grandparents learn about financial aid and show them how they can save for college. Build partnerships with local K-12 schools to improve academic and technical preparation for college.
3. **Schools:** Offer college-prep, technical classes, and challenging coursework to all students. Be sure all students and their families know about these courses in time to plan their academic programs, and build local partnerships with colleges, community colleges, universities, and businesses.
4. **Community members, religious groups, and businesses:** Call the schools in your area to volunteer as mentors and tutors. Mentors can help students learn about many different kinds of careers and college programs and master basic skills.
5. **Businesses:** Help students learn more about the kinds of careers that exist and the educational preparation that those careers required. Volunteer to visit a school and talk to students about the education and training that you received in order to get your job. Discuss the connection between the skills and knowledge you gained in high school and college, and the skills and knowledge that you use each day at work. Sponsor shadowing programs, internships, and apprenticeships in your businesses for middle school, high school, and college students so they can learn about careers firsthand.
6. **Community members, colleges, and religious groups:** Sponsor college visits for students and their families. Many students have never been exposed to the academic side of a college campus and aren't familiar with college programs. Arrange to have the admissions office talk to students about the courses they will need to enroll, what scholarships and financial aid are available, and the many exciting and rewarding careers that college graduates can pursue.
7. **Colleges, community members, and businesses:** Help high school guidance counselors conduct college fairs. Contact several colleges, make arrangements for college representatives to attend, publicize the event, and set up college visits.
8. **Colleges, community members, religious groups, and businesses:** Volunteer to help local high school students learn

about different college programs, the college application process, and financial aid forms. Counselors in many high schools do not have the time to provide one-on-one college counseling and guidance to each student.

9. **Businesses:** If you have expertise in financial planning and are familiar with the ways that families can save money for college, volunteer to talk about various savings strategies to students and parents at an elementary school or middle school in your area.
10. **Community members and businesses:** Provide opportunities for AmeriCorps and college work-study students to work in the community and earn money for college. Volunteer to help high school students research sources of financial aid. Go with them to the library to help them find reference books and guides to scholarships. Also, make sure that they explore all available institutional, state, and federal financial aid.

Selected Resources: Preparing your child for college includes both academic and financial preparation. You can seek information from your local school guidance counselor, local community college or university, and some community and service organizations. You can also obtain financial aid information from the U.S. Department of Education. The Department supplies seventy percent of the financial aid to college students in the United States. For the facts about financial aid, including the Direct Loan Program, call 1-800-4-FED-AID. Here are some other resources that you can use to find out more about planning for careers and college:

The Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1996-97 Edition.
U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996.

Careers for the '90s: Everything You Need To Know To Find the Right Career. Research and Education Association, 1994.

The College Board Guide to Jobs and Career Planning, Second Edition, Joyce Slaton Mitchell. The College Board, 1994.

The ACT and the National Career Development Association have developed a career exploration and guidance kit called, "Realizing the Dream." Ask your child's guidance counselor if *Realizing the Dream* is being used in your child's school or district. To find out more about the kit, you can call 319-337-1379 or write to the following address:

Heidi Hallberg, Program Coordinator--ACT
2201 North Dodge St.
P.O. Box 168
Iowa City, IA 52243-0168

The College Guide for Parents, Third Edition, Charles Shields. The College Board, 1994.

The College Handbook, 1996. The College Board, 1995.

Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges, 1996, Twenty-Sixth Edition. Peterson's Guides, 1995.

Barron's Profiles of American Colleges, Twenty-First Edition. Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1996.

Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges, Thirteenth Edition. Rugg's Recommendations, 1996.

The Multicultural Student's Guide to the Colleges, Robert Mitchell. Noonday Press, 1996.

The U.S. Department of Education offers a free PC-based software package that helps young people choose a college and learn about student financial aid. The package is called, the "AWARE Early Awareness Software." You can obtain a copy by calling 1-800-4FED-AID, or by writing to the following address:

Federal Student Aid Information Center
P.O. Box 84
Washington, D.C. 20044

For information on testing programs, write or call:

The College Board SAT Program
P.O. Box 6200
Princeton, NJ 08541-6200
609-771-7600

ACT Registration
P.O. Box 414
Iowa City, IA 52243
319-337-1270

PSAT/NMSQT
P.O. Box 6200
Princeton, NJ 08541-6200
609-771-7070

For a free copy of *Preparing Your Child for College: A Resource Book for Parents*, call the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-USA-LEARN. For a free copy of *The Student Guide: Financial Aid from the U.S. Department of Education*, call the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-4-FED-AID.



TIPS ON MEETING AMERICAN EDUCATION'S CHALLENGES

EXPANDING PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE: STRENGTHENING PUBLIC EDUCATION AS A FOUNDATION OF OUR AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE

This page offers tips on how to expand public school choice and charter schools and improve individual public schools. This is one of the issues that Americans say they want addressed by their schools.

Background: Public charter schools are a promising new vehicle for raising academic standards, empowering educators, involving parents and communities, and expanding choice and accountability in public education. Created and managed by groups of parents, teachers, community groups and others, they can be tailored to meet the needs of a local community. These schools -- now permitted in 20 states -- are public schools freed from most laws and regulations in exchange for accountability for better performance and results. Charter schools are non-sectarian, may not charge tuition, and should be open to all students. Parents and teachers also have additional options for tailoring educational opportunities for children, including public school choice, magnet schools, schools-within-schools, and redesigning and improving individual public schools.

10 Tips to Help Expand Public School Choice and Accountability in Your Community

1. **Families:** Get involved in your children's schools. Find out whether the school is setting high enough academic standards for your child, and whether the school is offering your child the educational opportunities he or she needs to meet the highest standards available in other schools and states. Get together with other families, teachers, community groups, school district staff, and the school's principal to begin to make improvements in your child's school. Join an existing school improvement committee, or help form a new one.
2. **Families:** One size does not fit all. Consider asking the local school district whether you have the option to send your child to another public school. If you do have this option for "public school choice," request information from the school district about all of your available choices. Ask about deadlines for applying, and begin shopping around early.
3. **Families:** If you are shopping around for a public school, write a list of key elements you desire in your child's education. Develop a set of questions you want to ask about the educational opportunities provided by a school for your child. Visit schools, sit down with the principal, stop in classrooms, and talk to teachers and parents at that school.
4. **Families, teachers, principals, and community organizations:** If existing schools don't meet your expectations, consider applying for a charter to create a new public school or convert an existing public school to "charter" status. Twenty states now permit teachers and others to form public charter schools, providing them with public funds and dramatic flexibility to custom-make a local school, while holding the school accountable for results. For a list of states, and people to contact in your state for further information, call 1-800-USA-LEARN.
5. **Families, teachers, principals, and community organizations:** If charter schools may be established in your state, find out the organizations that are authorized by state law to approve applications for charter schools (e.g., local school districts, state boards of education, a public university). Contact those organizations, ask for information about developing a charter school application, and request recommendations of people who have experience in developing a charter school. Find out whether your state permits only conversions of existing public schools or also permits the creation of new charter schools.
6. **School boards and states:** Review regulations and red tape and eliminate any that get in the way of schools trying to meet the needs of their students and help them meet challenging local and state standards. Provide assistance to all schools to enhance the quality of teaching and raise levels of learning for all students. Help regular public schools and public charter schools to improve and help them develop reliable performance standards by which schools are held accountable.
7. **School districts and states:** Promote public school choice and charter schools in a way that preserves public schooling and raises academic standards for all children. Develop helpful information for teachers, parents, and others who want

to custom-make a local public school to better help all students meet high academic standards. Provide relevant and understandable information about all public schools where families may send their children. Develop an effective process for reviewing applications for charter schools, and approve those that will have sound fiscal management and real promise to help all children learn. Ensure that transportation is available for students seeking to attend other public or charter schools. Provide adequate autonomy for charter and other public schools. Host conferences or seminars on charter school issues for potential applicants, existing charter schools, and their community partners. Raise awareness and conduct outreach to inform people of opportunities to form charter schools.

8. **Families, teachers, principals, community organizations, colleges and universities:** Recognize the importance of significant advance planning before submitting an application to form a charter school or making fundamental changes in an existing school. This enterprise is not easy; it takes time, energy, commitment, and considerable knowledge about teaching, learning, and management.
9. **Families, teachers, principals, community organizations, colleges, universities, and businesses:** Develop skills in building consensus, developing a shared vision, budgeting, contracting and financial management needed to manage a successful charter school, magnet school, or site-based managed school. Businesses, local colleges and universities, school districts, and others can help identify and develop these skills. Teachers, principals, and parents must work to develop these skills quickly and effectively to manage successful schools.
10. **Families, teachers, principals, community organizations, colleges, and universities:** Think about other critical issues in creating a school that improves teaching and learning for all. These include: decide that you are prepared to invest the time and energy needed; develop a consensus on your goals and vision for the school; decide if you want your school to have a specialized educational focus such as math and science, foreign languages, the arts, or preparation for the workplace; talk to and visit others involved in high-performing schools or who have successfully started a charter or magnet school; discuss what will be the nature of your curriculum, how time within the school day will be organized, how student learning will be assessed, where the school will be located if it is a new school, what will be the governance structure of the school, and by what performance measures the school will be held accountable.

Selected Resources: Contact one of the national organizations listed below for additional information and ideas to consider as you develop a charter school. Or call 1-800-USA-LEARN for a list of states with charter school laws, and contact names and telephone numbers in your state. And contact your local school district or state board of education for additional information.

In the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, President Clinton proposed and Congress enacted a competition for start-up funds for charter schools through the U.S. Department of Education, typically providing between \$30,000 and \$60,000 of "venture capital" annually for up to three years. The President is proposing substantial increases in this start-up fund. Also, school districts and states may use Goals 2000: Educate America Act funds to support efforts to redesign and improve public schools and to establish charter schools. IASA contains major financial support for efforts to raise the quality of teaching and improve schools across the country.

Center for School Change
Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota
301 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Tel: 612-626-1834
E-mail: Natha001@maroon.tc.umn.edu

RPP International
2200 Powell Street, Suite 250
Emeryville, CA 94608
Tel: 510-450-2550, 510-843-8574
E-mail: Rppintl.@aol.com

Charter Schools Strategies, Inc. (CSSI)
210 West Grant Street, Suite 321
Minneapolis, MN 55403-2244
Tel: 612-321-9221
Fax: 612-672-0244
E-mail: Charter SSI@aol.com

U.S. Department of Education
Information Resource Center
600 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20202-0498
1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327)
(Or in D.C. call 202-401-2000)